

*Carmel, NY* - Congressman John Hall (NY-19) and Congressman George Miller (CA-7) hosted a roundtable discussion regarding college affordability and changes to the student loan program for college students on Monday, July 12th at Peekskill High School, Peekskill, NY.

An improved student loan program for college students went into effect on July 1, 2010 as a part of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, which was included in the health care reconciliation bill. The program increases the maximum annual Pell Grant scholarship to \$5,550; and all new federal student loans will be originated through the Direct Loan program, instead of through lenders subsidized by taxpayers in the federally-guaranteed student loan program.

"Affordable education is as much a part of the American Dream as owning your own business," said Rep. Hall. "In these difficult economic times, Hudson Valley residents should be able to attend college without having to go into crippling debt. When students fail to access education or graduate with a degree, our economy suffers."

"Congressman Hall and I both know that our students and families shouldn't have to mortgage their future to get a good college education," said Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chair of the House Education and Labor Committee and author of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. "The recent investments we've made in our federal student loan programs are really investments in students, in working families and the future of this country."

The lawmakers discussed a wide range of issues relating to college affordability with over 60 Hudson Valley residents. Among those in attendance was Christine Muscolo, 19 year old University Of Maryland junior and Verplanck, NY resident who said, "Being able to secure federal loans has helped me pursue a career in community health and dedicate myself to public service. For me, this is purposeful work, and though not as lucrative as a career in banking, very rewarding on a personal level."

This bill invests more than \$40 billion in the Pell Grant program to ensure that eligible students receive an award, and that awards increase to keep pace with rising inflation.

In addition, originating all loans through the Direct Loan program will save taxpayers \$61 billion over 10 years. In addition to investing in college aid, eliminating subsidies to lenders will also reduce the deficit by at least \$10 billion over 10 years.

Joining Representatives Hall and Miller were Mayor of Peekskill, Mary Foster, Dr. Judith Johnson, Superintendent, Peekskill City School District; John Ivankovic, Director of Financial Aid, SUNY Orange; Gloria Leon, Director of Admissions, Westchester Community College, Brian Smarsh, Financial Aid Counselor, Westchester Community College; Sherry Mayo, Director, Peekskill Extension Center, Westchester Community College; Sue Mead, Director of Financial Aid at Dutchess Community College and Christine Muscolo, student at University of Maryland, College Park.

Congressman George Miller is chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee and the original author of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. Since his election to Congress in 1975, Rep. Miller has been a leading advocate on education, labor and the economy.